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ABSTRACT

The well-being of poor older people is a concern for society. Two random samples of people, 65 years old and older, were taken in Cleveland, Ohio--1,300 from the general population and 194 Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients. Both samples were interviewed in 1975 and 1976, and a well-being status was developed for each person in the areas of health, security, loneliness and outlook on life. Service information on 28 different services was obtained from 130 agencies. Older people receiving SSI were generally worst off in all levels of personal condition; for example, only 40% of the SSI sample could do all daily tasks without help while 60% of the general sample could do them all without help. Thirty percent of the SSI sample who needed help with daily tasks had unmet needs as compared to 40% of the general sample. However, 67% of the SSI sample with illnesses were not receiving full medical treatment as compared to only 58% of the general sample. (Although geographically specific, the data point out needs of a population toward which much current research is directed.) (Author/CKJ)

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THE POOR: THEIR WELL-BEING AND SERVICES RECEIVED

by

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SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME RECIPIENTS IN CLEVELAND, OHIO

Based on our sample, about 5 percent of the older people in Cleveland receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments. Analysis showed that many of these older people needed help in one or more of their personal conditions. Personal condition was defined as an older person's status in four areas of functioning--health, security, loneliness and outlook on life. In addition, many of those that needed help were not receiving it.

To assist in understanding the analysis, we divided this paper into the following sections:

--The methodology section shows how the analysis was done.

--The status section describes the condition of the older people that receive SSI payments.

--The comparison section shows how older people receiving SSI stand in relation to the general population.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this paper was obtained from the U.S. General Accounting Office study of the well-being of older people in Cleveland, Ohio. This data base contains information on the characteristics of 1,505 people 65 and older sampled from the Cleveland population. The data base is composed of two separate

samples. The first contains 1,311 people sampled from the general population of older people. The second consists of 194 SSI recipients. Both samples were interviewed twice (1975 and 1976) with approximately a one year interval between interviews.

In studying the well-being status of older people, we used a questionnaire developed by the Duke University Center for the Study of Aging and Human Development in collaboration with the Administration on Aging, the former Social and Rehabilitation Service of HEW, and the former Health Resources Administration of HEW. Questions were asked about an older person's status in the following areas of functioning (1) social, (2) economic, (3) mental, (4) physical, and (5) activities of daily living.

Service information for our sample was provided by 118 agencies that served the Cleveland area. This information included the frequency and types of services provided to our sample. The Cleveland Foundation was particularly helpful in supporting the study and acting as a catalyst in obtaining support from service agencies.

The older person's responses to questions during the interview were used to determine his or her status in each of the following personal conditions: health, security, loneliness, outlook on life and overall well-being. See appendices I and

II for a further description of the four conditions and their categories and a description of helps for these conditions.

STATUS

The status of older people receiving SSI was determined for each of four personal conditions: health, security, loneliness and outlook on life. A scale based on all four personal conditions was used to determine their overall status.

Health condition

Thirty-seven percent of the SSI recipients were in the worst health condition as compared to only 25 percent of the general population.

An older person's health condition is based on their illness situation and ability to do daily tasks. Nearly all (91 percent) of our SSI sample had one or more illnesses.

However, for many of these older people their illnesses did not interfere with their ability to do daily tasks or interferred only a little. For analysis of illnesses, we used the criteria of the worst illnesses--those that interferred a great deal with a person's activities of daily living. Using this criteria, 52 percent of the older people in the SSI sample had one or more illnesses as shown in the following table.

Number of illnesses greatly affecting activities	Percent of sample	
None	48	
1	22	)
		) 52
2 or more	30	)
	100	
Number in sample	(193)	

The older a person was, the more likely he or she was to have an illness that interferred a great deal with their activities. Only 44 percent of the 65 to 69 age group had an illness that interferred greatly with their activities compared to 57 percent of those 85 and older. The following table shows the illness situation for all age groups:

Number of illnesses greatly affecting activities	Percent by age groups					
	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85+	Total
None	56	52	43	46	43	48
One	19	24	18	27	22	22
Two or more	25	24	39	27	35	30
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number in sample	(32)	(50)	(51)	(37)	(23)	(193)

The most common illnesses greatly affecting activities were arthritis, mental illness, circulation trouble, heart trouble, high blood pressure and the effects of a stroke. Arthritis and mental illness each greatly affected the activities of 29 percent of the sample; circulation trouble did so for 15 percent; heart trouble did for 8 percent; and high blood pressure and the effects of a stroke each did so for 6 percent.

Many older people in the SSI sample did not receive all the medical treatment they needed. Only 33 percent of the sample that had illnesses that bothered them a great deal received appropriate treatment for all of their illnesses. In terms of the entire SSI sample, this means that approximately one of every three older people (35 percent) are not receiving treatment for all their most troublesome illnesses.

In addition to illnesses many older people--60 percent of the SSI sample--have trouble doing routine daily tasks.

Thirty-eight percent needed help in performing one or more tasks and 22 percent could not do one or more of the tasks even if helped.

Again the older a person was, the more likely he or she was to have trouble doing daily tasks. The following table shows the data for all age groups:

Ability to do daily tasks	Percent by age groups					
	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85+	Total
Can do all without help	66	60	31	27	4	40
Can do all with some help	25	28	49	51	31	38
Unable to do one or more tasks even with help	9	12	20	22	65	22
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number in sample	(32)	(50)	(51)	(37)	(23)	(193)

The daily tasks the older people on SSI most frequently had trouble performing were doing housework, getting places out of walking distance and going shopping. Forty-five percent of the SSI sample could not do housework without help, 40 percent could not go shopping without help, and 38 percent needed help getting to places out of walking distances.

Many older people who were unable to do daily tasks or needed some help to perform the tasks were not receiving that help. Nearly 30 percent of the older people that needed help with daily tasks were not receiving all the help needed.

Security condition

Each older person's security condition was defined in terms of how often they worried. Nearly half of the SSI sample worried with 18 percent saying they worried fairly often and 30 percent saying they worried very often.

Analysis of the security condition by health condition and feelings about income indicated that these two factors did affect worry. As can be seen in the following table, older people in the best health worried less often than the sample as a whole. The best health group was defined as those older people who had no illnesses bothering them a great deal and who could do all daily tasks without help.

Feelings of security	Percent of older people receiving SSI: Entire sample	Best health group
Worry hardly ever	52	67
Worry fairly often	18	19
Worry very often	30	14
	100	100
Number in sample	(174)	(49)

The following table shows that older people who felt that their income met their needs very well worried less often than those who felt that their income met their needs poorly.

Feelings of security	Feels that money meets needs		
	Very well	Fairly well	Poorly
		(percent)	
Worry hardly ever	80	53	43
Worry fairly often	20	20	16
Worry very often	0	27	41
	100	100	100
Number in sample	(15)	(98)	(58)
Percent of sample	(9)	(57)	(34)

Many older people do not receive enough financial aid. Using those whose money met their needs poorly as in need of financial help, approximately 34 percent of the SSI recipients needed additional financial aid.

Loneliness condition

Fifty-five percent of the people in the SSI sample said they felt lonely--37 percent felt lonely sometimes and 18 percent felt lonely quite often.

The many problems of aging seems to be compounded when older people loose their ability to get around and thus lose contact with friends and relatives. At the same time, many of their friends experience the same problems and some of them die. Thus, the older person begins to feel lonely along with the many other economic and health problems. The following table shows the loneliness condition and the degree of contact outside the home for the SSI sample.

Feel lonely	Degree of outside contact			
	Low	Medium	High	Total
Often	15	28	11	18
Sometimes	48	31	35	37
Almost never	37	41	54	45
Total	100	100	100	100
Number in sample	(46)	(61)	(74)	(187)

Some of this loneliness appears to be due to the infrequency of social contacts--either in person or by telephone. To illustrate, only about 46 percent of those with frequent social contacts felt lonely at times, compared to 63 percent of those with little contact. In addition, the lack of outside social contacts had less effect on those living with someone than on those living alone. For older people with low social contacts, only about 57 percent of those living with someone felt lonely at times compared to 75 percent of those living alone.

The service defined as treatment for the loneliness condition was social recreational service. Over 78 percent of the older people on SSI who needed social recreational help were not receiving it. This means that about 19 percent of the older population receiving SSI need social-recreational help and are not receiving it. Our determination of need was based on the frequency of social contact and we defined older people in need who had very infrequent social contacts.

Outlook on life

More than one third of the people in our sample had developed a negative outlook with 42 percent in the middle and only 22 percent with what could be considered a positive outlook on life. For many older people the problems of aging led to the development or a very negative outlook on life. To measure their outlook on life we combined answers to questions regarding their feelings of uselessness and how they felt about life in general.

Less than five percent of the older people in our sample who needed developmental help (for definition of developmental help see appendix II) were receiving it. This means an estimated 35 percent of the older population receiving SSI need developmental services but are not receiving them. For this kind of help, we based our determination of need on an older person's outlook on life and defined those with a negative outlook as being in need of developmental help.

Overall condition

Examining the overall condition of the older people receiving SSI showed that 35 percent were in the worst conditions and only 15 percent were in the best conditions. To determine the overall condition of older people we combined all four personal conditions. In addition the total number of needs both treated and untreated were examined with an emphasis on multiple needs.

Overall well being	Percent of sample
Best	15
Marginal	50
Worst	35
	100
Number in sample	(163)

Nearly 83 percent of the older people who had problems in one or more personal conditions were not receiving treatment or help for all of their needs. For those with multiple problems or needs 95 percent were not receiving full treatment.

We associated three services with the identification of multiple needs and the location of appropriate helps. Those services were

(1) outreach to locate older people in need;

(2) systematic multidimensional evaluation to identify the specific needs of the older people; and,

(3) information and referral to guide the older people to the agencies that provide the services they need.

Less than half--43 percent--of the older people with multiple needs received any of these services and only one received all three of the services.

In summary, many of the older people receiving SSI have problems in many different areas of their lives and these problems lead to a decline in their personal conditions. The following table summarizes those conditions for the SSI sample (See appendix I for description of best, marginal and worst).

Condition	Category			
	Best	Marginal	Worst	Total
Health	30	33	37	100
Security	51	20	29	100
Loneliness	47	36	17	100
Outlook on life	23	41	36	100
Overall	15	50	35	100

In addition, many of those older people on SSI who have problems in various conditions are not receiving the needed help or treatments. For example, sixty-seven percent of the sample have illnesses that interfere a great deal with their activities and are not receiving full medical treatment, as shown in the following table.

EFFECTIVENESS OF FIVE KINDS OF HELP

Kind of help[1]	Basis for determining need	(1) Percent of sample in need	(2) Percent of sample in need but not receiving full treatment	(3) Percent with unmet needs (Col. 2 ÷ Col. 1)
Medical treatment	Have illness that interferes a great deal with activities	52	35	67
Compensatory help	Cannot do daily task without help	60	18	30
Financial help	Amount of money poorly meets individual needs	34	0	[2]
Social recreational help	Infrequent social contacts	24	19	79
Developmental help	Negative outlook on life	36	35	97

[1] For definitions of helps see appendix II.

[2] All of those in need were receiving help but not enough.

COMPARISON

In relation to the entire older population, older people receiving SSI were generally in a worse category at all levels of personal condition. For example, only 40 percent of SSI sample could do all daily tasks without help while 60 percent of the general sample could do them all without help. The following table presents a comparison of the personal conditions of the SSI sample with the general sample of the older population.

COMPARISON OF PERSONAL CONDITIONS OF SSI AND GENERAL SAMPLES

Personal condition	Percent of sample in category			
	Best	Marginal	Worst	Total
Health				
SSI sample	30	33	37	100
General sample	48	27	25	100
Illness				
SSI sample	48	22	30	100
General sample	67	18	15	100
Ability to do daily tasks				
SSI sample	40	38	22	100
General sample	60	28	12	100
Security				
Worry				
SSI sample	52	19	29	100
General sample	51	25	24	100
Feelings about money				
SSI sample	9	57	34	100
General sample	25	58	17	100
Loneliness				
Lonely				
SSI sample	45	37	18	100
General sample	59	28	13	100
Contact				
SSI sample	41	34	25	100
General sample	43	40	17	100
Outlook on life				
SSI sample	22	42	36	100
General sample	24	50	26	100
Overall				
SSI sample	15	50	35	100
General sample	32	47	21	100

Although generally in a worse condition than the general sample, older people receiving SSI were more likely to receive needed help for some personal conditions. For example, only 30 percent of the SSI sample who needed help with daily tasks had unmet needs as compared to 40 percent of the general sample. However, 67 percent of the SSI sample with illnesses were not receiving full medical treatment as compared to only 58 percent of the general sample with unmet medical needs. A complete comparison of the percent of older people with unmet needs is provided in the following table.

COMPARISON OF UNMET NEEDS FOR THE SSI AND GENERAL SAMPLES

Personal condition	Type of treatment or help	Percent of older people with unmet needs[1/]	
		SSI sample	General sample
Health Illness	Medical treatment	67	58
Health Ability to do daily tasks	Compensatory help	30	40
Security	Financial aid	2/	2/
Loneliness	Social recreational help	78	83
Outlook on life	Developmental help	97	95

1/ The percent of older people with unmet needs is calculated by dividing the number of elderly with unmet needs by the number of older people in need.

2/ Since everyone in the SSI sample and nearly everyone in the general sample were receiving some form of financial aid, this statistic was not suitable for comparison.

APPENDIX I

DESCRIPTION OF PERSONAL CONDITIONS

Category	HEALTH			SECURITY	LONELINESS	OUTLOOK ON LIFE	OVERALL PERSONAL CONDITION
	Illness situation	Ability to do daily tasks	Overall health				
Best	No illness that interferes a great deal with activities	Can do all 13 tasks without help	In best category for both illness condition and ability to do daily tasks	Worry hardly ever	Feels lonely almost never	Does not feel useless and finds life exciting	(1) In best category for all 4 conditions or (2) best for 3 and marginal for the other
Marginal	One illness that interferes a great deal with activities	Can do all 13 tasks but only with help in one or more	(1) In best category for illness condition or ability to do daily tasks and marginal in other or (2) in marginal category for both	Worry fairly often	Feels lonely sometimes	(1) Finds life exciting but feels useless or (2) does not feel useless but finds life dull or routine	(1) In marginal category for 2 or more conditions and best for other or (2) in worst category for only one condition
Worst	Two or more illness that interfere a great deal with activities	Can't do at least one task even with help	In worst category for either illness condition or ability to do daily tasks	Worry very often	Feels lonely quite often	Feels useless and finds life routine or dull	In worst category for 2 or more conditions

DESCRIPTION OF HELPS FOR PERSONAL CONDITIONS

Conditions	Helps
Health	
Illnesses	Treatments for illnesses were defined as the appropriate medical treatments for specific illnesses.
Ability to do daily tasks	Helps for active daily living (ADL) deficiencies included transportation, escort, checking, continuous supervision, personal care, nursing care, meal preparation, homemaker, supportive devices and administrative legal services. These compensatory helps were defined as appropriate treatments for the various ADL deficiencies.
Security	Financial aid was defined as appropriate help for money problems.
Loneliness	Social recreational service was defined as the appropriate help for the elderly with little or no social contact.
Outlook on life	Developmental help (e.g. educational and employment services) was defined as appropriate for older people with a negative outlook on life.